

# First Round of ARIP Grants Now Available

## Priority will be given to projects that provide the greatest benefit to agricultural producers

MADISON, Wis. — On Feb. 12, the Wisconsin Ag Coalition, local government and timber industry advocates and the Department of Transportation held a press conference to promote the Agricultural Road Improvement Program. The program, created last year in Wisconsin Act 13 and funded as part of the biennial state budget, will provide \$150 million to fund projects improving local roads that cause problems for the agriculture industry due to weight postings.

The groups encourage farmers and loggers throughout the state to contact their local governments and ask them to submit applications for the first round of grants. Applications for the first round of grants are now available at DOT's website. A form to assist farmers and other agribusiness owners to provide local officials with the economic data needed to apply for the grants, is available online at [wbf.com](http://wbf.com).

The Ag Coalition and local government advocates thank the bill authors, Senators Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green), Cory Tomczyk (R-Mosinee) and Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan), and Representatives Travis Tranel (R-Cuba City) and Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah), and bipartisan legislators who lent their support to passage of the program and Governor Tony Evers for signing it into law. They also thanked the Department of Transportation for their extensive collaborative efforts to get the program up and running.

A number of state agricultural leaders chimed in on the development:

"Now is the time for farmers and agribusinesses to contact local officials and ask them to apply for these funds. With grants provided through this program, local governments will have the means to undertake crucial repairs and reconstruction projects, reducing transportation costs and promoting the overall resilience of Wisconsin's food supply chain." – Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation Executive Director of Governmental Relations Jason Mugnaini

"We are thankful for the passage and implementation of this vital funding. This investment not only fosters Wisconsin agriculture's economic growth but also bolsters our food security. Dairy processors in Wisconsin depend on the safe and efficient movement of milk from producer to processor and ultimately to the consumer. This funding marks a critical step forward in enhancing our infrastructure and ensuring our ability to remain competitive." – Wisconsin Dairy Products Association Executive Director Amy Winters

"WCHA is appreciative of any effort to improve local roads in Wisconsin, and thanks the Governor and Legislature for adding these funds to address roads that support the agriculture industry in Wisconsin. The increased demands on those local roads warrant the attention." – Wisconsin County Highway Association Executive Director Patrick Vander Sanden

"Cities and villages are home to a diverse array of businesses and industry, including important agricultural processing and supply businesses, all of which rely on a quality and robust transportation infrastructure. This program will help address insufficient infrastructure that creates barriers between production and processing." – League of Wisconsin Municipalities Director of Government Affairs Toni Herkert

"ARIP grants will provide a much-needed boost to local road projects in rural areas. Transportation continues to be a serious challenge for those of us in the agriculture industry, and we appreciate the efforts of the bill authors and DOT to help us work on creative solutions." – Wisconsin Soybean Association President Sara Stelter

"Wisconsin's \$44 billion dairy industry moves more than 88 million pounds of milk – and millions more pounds of dairy products – over our roadways each day to consumers across the country and for markets around the world. Dairy processors thank state lawmakers and

agency leaders for recognizing the pressing need to invest in our rural infrastructure, in turn strengthening rural businesses and ensuring Wisconsin remains America's Dairyland for generations to come." – Wisconsin Cheese Makers Association Senior Director of Programs & Policy Rebekah Sweeney

"Rural roads are part of our livelihood. All commodities start out on rural roads, it is a vital part of our daily lives. Wisconsin Corn Growers commend our representatives for understanding the needs of rural road infrastructure." – Wisconsin Corn Growers President James Giese

"Wisconsin's local roads serve as a critical first and last mile link in the distribution of agricultural and forestry products. The state's investment in this new Agricultural Road Improvement Program will go a long way toward improving our local transportation system's ability to safely and efficiently connect producers and consumers." – Wisconsin Towns Association Executive Director Mike Koles

"Wisconsin depends on its rural infrastructure for food and forest products. The Agricultural Road Improvement Program provides an unprecedented funding opportunity for that infrastructure to finally be improved to the long overdue standard needed to keep these industries viable well into the future." – Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association President Troy Brown

"Our farms and businesses rely on rural, agricultural roads which serve as the lifeblood of our communities. This program shows our lawmakers and the Administration's commitment to our farms, our communities and our state. We are excited to work with our local officials to utilize this much-needed support of rural infrastructure." – Dairy Business Association President Lee Kinnard

"Farmer-owned cooperatives depend on rural roads to help their members process and market crops and dairy. We are grateful to the legislative leaders who spearheaded ARIP and look forward

to the benefits it will bring to Wisconsin.” –  
Cooperative Network Government Affairs  
Director Jennifer Wickman

“Rural roads are crucial to supporting our  
agriculture economy. ARIP will help address  
bridges, culverts, and road conditions that have  
resulted in postings that close direct routes  
between the field and processing plant.” –  
Midwest Food Products Association President  
Jason Culotta

“Wisconsin Pork Association is grateful for the  
work conducted by Senators Marklein, Tomczyk  
and Ballweg as well as Representatives Tranel  
and VanderMeer to enhance rural roads and  
structures throughout the state.” – Wisconsin  
Pork Association President Christina Meylor

The program is designed to enhance local  
roads, eliminate posted routes and benefit all  
rural drivers. It creates a mechanism to  
repair or replace

structures under 20 feet in length which were not  
eligible for federal revenue for local bridges.

To be eligible for a grant under the program, a  
route or structure must have been posted for  
weight for at least one month in the previous  
year, be maintained by a local government  
and provide access to agricultural lands or  
facilities. Local governments can expect to have  
90 percent of the cost for these projects  
funded by state grant dollars.

Priority will be given to projects that provide the  
greatest benefit to agricultural producers  
using the following criteria:

It provides the greatest positive economic  
impact; It provides access to the largest number  
of farmers or volume of agricultural goods; it  
improves the only practicable access to a farm field  
or facility; it will result in the reduction of cost for  
farmers due to repeated trips at reduced weight,  
labor, fuel or mileage/wear on agricultural  
equipment.

Application materials can be found on DOT's  
website.